

Labor *Family* NEWS

PARTNERING WITH UNIONS TO PUT FAMILIES *first* SPRING/SUMMER 2010

GOOD JOBS NOW!

In this issue:



- **Unions Support Adoptive Families**
- **Family Leave Victory**

UNIONS WIN IT!

WHAT: Flexible Work Options

WHERE: Pennsylvania

WHO: Temple Association of University Professionals (TAUP) & Temple University

Tenured or tenure-track faculty members represented by the TAUP can get relief from teaching duties for up to one academic semester without any reduction in pay if they are the primary caregiver of a newly arrived child aged five years or less. The faculty member must request the relief within six months from the date of birth, adoption or placement of a foster child into the primary caregiver's household. Tenure-track faculty members can also request a one year extension to the tenure clock for the birth, adoption or placement of a foster child under five years of age.

MORE ON 2

Stop the Big Boxing of America

BY JENYA CASSIDY

With at least 15 million Americans out of work, everyone knows the unemployment rate is soaring. But what about the 80 million who are employed? Millions of workers in the service sector are keeping the economy running – they bag our groceries, clean our hotel rooms and serve our food for increasingly lower wages, limited or no benefits and no control over their schedule or ability to be there when their families need them. And according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, this is what we have to look forward to: Eight of the top ten occupations projected to generate the most jobs by 2016 are low-wage jobs in the service sector.

Right now, Walmart is America's largest private employer. Labor-community coalitions have protested the retail giant and tried to block it from moving into new areas for years. When Walmart moves in to a new community, large union grocery stores and mom and pop retail stores go out of business, wages go down and the local environment is impacted. According to the grassroots community coalition Wake Up Walmart, the store has avoided paying state taxes at a time when some states are contemplating laying off teachers and other state workers due to deficits. And recently, union members and work family advocates have drawn attention to Walmart's family un-friendly policies like penalizing employees who need to take a sick day.

NEGATIVE SICK LEAVE POLICY

This February, labor and community members in 50 cities across the US marched on Walmart management to protest the store's anti-worker sick leave policy. According to a recent New York Times story, the retail giant gives demerits to employees when they call in sick. Even a handful of demerits can lead to dismissal from the job. "We were there to let Walmart know the community is watching. People should not get fired for calling in sick or staying home with a sick child," said Rebecca Jones, a member of ATU Local 192, who participated in the California action.

(employees), the store reserves the right to change work schedules on a regular basis. "It can be a humbling experience," says Stephen Potts, a Walmart Associate in Woodbridge, Virginia. "Walmart changes things so much it keeps us constantly unbalanced. The schedule changes are really hard on parents who need child care – some end up having to leave their children home alone."

Cindy Murry, a Walmart Associate for almost ten years, keeps the same schedule now but feels bad for her co-workers who can't count on regular hours. According to Murry, many Associates depend on the income from an additional job but can't keep one with the constant schedule changes. "It wasn't always like this," she said. "This company is going in the wrong direction - well, it might be a good direction for Walmart but it definitely isn't for us."

We need jobs. But according to Annette Bernhardt and Christine Owens of the National Employment Law Project (*The Nation*, March 2009), if the government doesn't get back into the business of enforcing wage and overtime laws and favoring employers who pay living wages and provide family benefits, the jobs we have will keep us on the path toward greater and greater inequality. We need to band together to demand not just jobs, but good jobs – jobs that sustain us financially and still allow us the time to care for ourselves and our family members.

Walmart is not the only company, retail or otherwise, with a negative sick leave policy. But, as Wake Up Walmart activists point out, its sheer size and impact on the US economy make it more than a symbol in the movement for good jobs. Silvia Fabela, an organizer for Wake Up Walmart says, "With 1.4 million workers, Walmart has the upper hand in the retail industry and sets the standard. Other large stores have cut health care and changed their policies to match Walmart's in order to stay competitive."

WALMART LEADING THE WRONG WAY

One Walmart policy that other retailers now make use of is the constant changing of schedules. According to Walmart Associates



Wake Up Walmart

Rebecca Jones, member of ATU Local 192 in Oakland protesting Walmart's paid sick days policy

Photo by Jenya Cassidy, LPWF

WHAT: Child Care Fund

WHERE: New York

WHO: Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 & MTA New York City (NYC) Transit

Members of TWU Local 100 employed by the MTA NYC Transit have negotiated quality, affordable arrangements for their pre-school and school-age children through an employer paid Child Care Fund (CCF) jointly administered by a labor-management committee. The CCF offers four programs to the members including a Voucher Program, Summer Program, Newborn Stipend and Referral Service. The first three programs help members with child care costs while the Referral Service program helps members find quality child care services in their area.

Looking for good work family contract language? Have some of your own to share? Get ideas, find resources and share your successes at www.learnworkfamily.org

WorkFamily



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UNIONS SUPPORT ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Equal Benefits for All Families

BY VIBHUTI MEHRA

When Elsa Yilma, an animal research technician at Harvard University, decided to adopt her deceased brother's three children from Ethiopia, she went to her union for help. Elsa came to the United States from Ethiopia over 22 years ago. In March 2006, Elsa's brother in Ethiopia passed away leaving behind his three daughters Abejesh (7), Yinesu (9) and Kassaye (12). Elsa, the mother of two biological children, had also raised her sister's five children when both their parents passed away. She knew that the adoption process would be expensive and difficult – Ethiopia has no structure in place for international kinship adoption. Elsa approached her union, the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW), and was able to get adoption subsidies of \$5,000 per adoptive child through the collective bargaining agreement. Even with the subsidies, international adoption was expensive – Elsa spent \$15,000 on plane fares alone. Finally, in August 2008, the three girls reached the United States. "I couldn't believe it the day they walked off the plane. They had been through so much. But they looked beautiful and strong. It was a dream come true," says Elsa.

ADOPTIVE PARENTS NEED SUPPORT

More adoptions take place in the United States each year than is commonly perceived or reported. A 2002 report from the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption found that 65 percent of Americans have experience with adoption either through their own family or through close friends. A 2006 report from the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute estimates that more than 135,000 adoptions take place in the country annually.

The Adoption Institute estimates that of non-stepparent adoptions each year, approximately 59 percent are from the child welfare system, 26 percent are from abroad, and 15 percent are domestic infants. While a majority of adoptions in the United States occur domestically, it is estimated that over a quarter million children were adopted by US citizens from other countries in the three decades between 1971 and 2001.

The adoption process can be full of multiple stressors including unpredictability, long waits, endless paperwork and substantial financial costs. The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) estimates that adoption costs may range from \$0 to \$2,500 for domestic public agency adoptions to as high as \$30,000 for domestic private agency or independent

BARGAIN FOR ADOPTION BENEFITS

Unions can bargain for a range of benefits and programs that support adoptive parents. Here are some types of union-negotiated adoption benefits:

- **Adoption Assistance/ Subsidies** – cash benefit/ reimbursement to offset the costs of adoption.
- **Adoption/Parental Leave (Maternal/ Paternal)** – paid or unpaid job-protected for leave adoptive mothers and/or fathers before and after the adoption of a child.
- **Recognizing Family Diversity** – Inclusive and expanded contract language that equally extends benefits such as adoption subsidies and parental leave to all parents, including single adoptive parents and same-sex and opposite sex domestic partners.

For examples of contract language on adoption benefits, visit LEARN WorkFamily at www.learnworkfamily.org



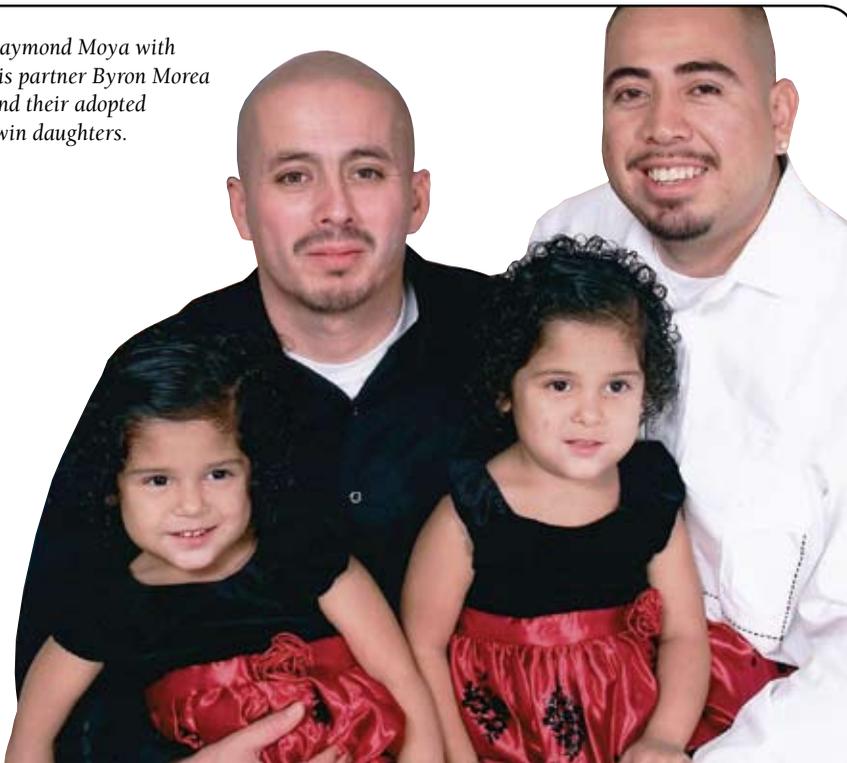
Elsa Yilma's union – Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW) – helped her through a difficult international adoption process.

adoptions. For international adoptions, basic fees alone may range from \$10,000 to over \$30,000. These costs do not account for the loss of wages that adoptive parents may endure for time off work during the adoption process and unpaid leave to care for a child after the adoption is completed.

THE UNION ADVANTAGE

Employers are beginning to realize that adoption benefits to help offset costs and reduce stress for adoptive parents are a valuable incentive for hiring and retaining their best workers. However, the American workplace has a long way to go in terms of offering benefits to adoptive parents that are on par with those for birth parents. Labor

Raymond Moya with his partner Byron Morea and their adopted twin daughters.



unions can play a vital role in creating a workplace in which adoptive families are equally valued.

Maria Somma, currently the Health Care Organizing Coordinator for the United Steelworkers (USW), was working as an organizer for the Illinois Nurses Association (INA) in 1999 when she and her husband adopted twins out of the Illinois state foster care system. "My employer was a union and I had a union contract that allowed me necessary time off for interviews, home visits and other procedures as we went through the adoption process. When the adoption came through in 2000, I was in the middle of a big organizing campaign. My employer told me to take care of my personal business and found someone to cover for me while I took three weeks of paid parental leave," says Maria. Maria's husband, then employed with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), was also able to take three weeks of paid parental leave.

Elsa too credits her union for standing by her side through a difficult international adoption process. "It would have been impossible for me to manage the adoption without the union's negotiated adoption benefits," says Elsa. Besides the subsidies, Elsa's union contract provided her with a month-long paid leave to be with the children after they arrived in the United States.

DIVERSITY OF FAMILIES

As unions negotiate for work family benefits that support adoptive parents, it is important that the contract language reflects the diversity of adoptive families today. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, 33 percent of adoptions from foster care are by a single parent. Studies show that most single adoptive parents are women. Research also shows that an increasing number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

(LGBT) individuals and couples are becoming adoptive parents.

Raymond Moya, a former employee of SEIU Local 521, was diagnosed with cancer when he and his husband were in the early stages of adopting their twin daughters. He had to leave his job. "My sickness became a blessing in disguise because I got to stay home with my infant girls. If I had left them at a daycare after 6 weeks, it could have hindered the adoption process because you have to be a "nurturing parent". They could question how you can be a nurturing parent when you leave your child in daycare that early," says Raymond. Pointing out that women who give birth tend to get more parental benefits than adoptive parents, he adds, "As a member of the LGBT community, I feel that people assume I don't need as much time off because I am a man. It is important to consider that when you have a new child, parental leave is important whether you are a woman or a man. The needs of the child don't change whether s/he is born to you or adopted by you. Our leave policies and contract language have to be written broadly so that both birth and adoptive parents get equal leave and wage replacement."

Barbara Bamberger, member of the bargaining unit at the Professional Engineers in California Government (PECG) concurs: "Unions play an important role in ensuring that adoptive parents are treated as equal to biological/birth parents in every way. There needs to be a strategic discussion in the workforce on parenting whether it's through natural childbirth or adoption. One part of the workforce should not be disadvantaged over the other in the workforce. We need to move away from limiting the contract language to "pregnancy" or "disability" leave to using inclusive parental leave language and ensuring that the "paid" part of such leave policies is allowable to all parents – whether birth or adoptive."

UNBELIEVABLE

■ **AS THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN WORKERS** with virtually no retirement savings grew for the third straight year, over four in 10 had less than \$10,000 saved according to a new survey. *Employee Benefit Research Institute*

■ **THE CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT RULED THAT CWA MEMBERS EMPLOYED BY AT&T ARE NOT ENTITLED TO KIN CARE RIGHTS UNDER THE LANGUAGE OF THEIR CONTRACT.** The Kin Care law allows California employees to use up to one half of their yearly accrued sick leave to care for ill parents, spouses, registered domestic partners or children. The Court ruled that CWA members who do not accrue sick leave but have access to an uncapped bank of sick leave cannot benefit from the Kin Care law. *For more information, go to cwa9400.com*

GOODNEWS

■ **CONGRESS APPROVED LEGISLATION THAT EXPANDS COVERAGE OF AIRLINE FLIGHT CREWS UNDER THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA).** The FMLA provides eligible workers up to 12 weeks of leave to bond with a new child and care for themselves or a seriously ill family member. Due to the unique way flying work hours are calculated, flight attendants and pilots do not usually meet the 1,250 hour per year eligibility requirement for FMLA. The new legislation corrects this problem by changing the calculation of qualifying hours for these workers. *For more information, go to www.afanet.org*

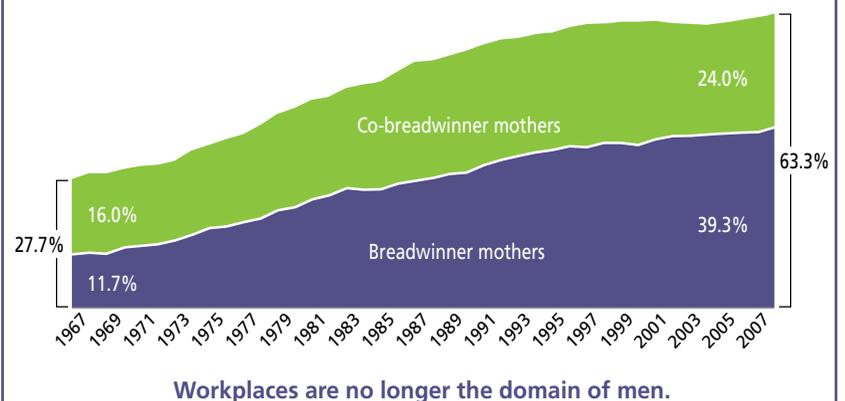
GREATRESOURCES

■ **WE DON'T JUST NEED JOBS – WE NEED GOOD JOBS!** A new book by Jody Heymann and Alison Earle, *Raising the Global Floor: Dismantling the Myth that We Can't Afford Good Working Conditions for Everyone* analyzes the relationship between labor conditions, national competitiveness and unemployment rates in 190 countries. The authors show that there is no relationship between unemployment rates and providing basic protections to workers and their families. *Published by Stanford University Press, For more information go to www.sup.org*



The New Workforce

Share of mothers who are breadwinners or co-breadwinners, 1967 to 2008



Source: Heather Boushey and Jeff Chapman's analysis of Miriam King, Steven Ruggles, Trent Alexander, Donna Leicach, Matthew Sobek. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series Current Population Survey, Version 2.0, Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center, 2009*
Used in "Our Working Nation - How Working Women Are Reshaping America's Families and Economy and What It Means for Policymakers."

Labor Project for Working Families

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- **Unions Support Adoptive Families**

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NETSYNOTE

A health care worker is being pressured to stay late in spite of the fact that she has to pick her kids up from child care. At clothing stores in New York



City, workers are upset that they can't get regular schedules and are expected to be available to work all hours. Walmart workers have paid sick days but are penalized for using them. Workers in every type of job are forced to find a second job just to make ends meet for their families.

Are work family issues organizing issues? In recent interviews with young organizers, I learned that work family issues are part of the conversation with unorganized workers – yet it is often not the explicit reason they are organizing a union.

Workers are organizing for decent pay, health benefits and respect on the job. They are organizing because they are incredibly stressed trying every day to raise a family on a low salary or two jobs. They are worried about how to pay the doctor's bill if their child gets sick, who will stay home with them and how it will affect the job they have. Workers are struggling and often don't see that they can make changes at the workplace that will help with their family responsibilities.

Union members have it better. But unions are also engaged in the fight to win basic labor standards for all workers. In a new report, "Our Working Nation," the Center for American Progress offers a Policy Roadmap including:

- Predictable and flexible work schedules as a basic labor standard.
- Paid family and medical leave and paid sick days to all workers.
- No discrimination against workers including pregnant women and caregivers.
- Direct support to families with child care and elder care needs.

These policies are good for children, good for families and good for the economy. Whether we are engaged in educating the public about the policies of big box stores like Walmart, organizing workers in hip clothing stores in New York City, or fighting for paid sick days or expanded family leave, we have to raise the standards for all workers.

Netty Frazier

Join **LEARN WorkFamily** – a free online network that features resources and contract language on work family benefits and programs.
www.learnworkfamily.org



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California Media Workers Guild, Local 39521
CA Teamsters Public Affairs Council
Carpenters Local 22
Carpenters, Northern California Counties
Coalition of Labor Union Women

Coalition of Labor Union Women - East Bay Chapter
Contra Costa County Central Labor Council
CWA Local 9000
CWA Local 9410
Engineers & Scientists of California Local 20, IPFTE
Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers
IBEW Local 6
*IBEW Local 302
IBEW Local 1245
IPFTE Local 17
ILWU Northern California District Council
North Bay Labor Council
OPEIU Local 29
Sacramento Central Labor Council
San Bernardino-Riverside Counties CLC
San Mateo County Central Labor Council
Sign Display & Allied Crafts, Local 510
South Bay Labor Council
Teamsters Joint Council 7
Teamsters Local 70
Teamsters Local 287
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